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ABSTRACT

A strategic plan to strengthen and expand the nation's existing apprenticeship system contains three components: apprenticeship promotion and marketing, national registration and tracking system, and quality. Efforts to promote apprenticeship must involve a two-pronged strategy that seeks both to develop new programs and expose potential program applicants to career opportunities through apprenticeship. Efforts should take two principal forms: (1) providing information about apprenticeship, with technical assistance regarding program development, to prospective program sponsors; and (2) conducting marketing and outreach efforts to the public and targeted groups to increase awareness of apprenticeship opportunities. The federal government, states, and individual program sponsors are carrying out some limited activities of this nature. For more than a decade, the Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training has been attempting to institute a comprehensive, computerized national program/apprentice registration and tracking system. Implementation has been hampered by insufficient resources. Those responsible at the federal and state levels for promoting and ensuring quality within the apprenticeship system do not have the resources necessary to perform this function effectively. An investment of $24.5 million would support activities in all three components. (YLB)

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PROMOTING AND EXPANDING APPRENTICESHIP

A Strategic Plan for Preparing America's Work Force of Tomorrow (Phase I)

Prepared by

The Federal Committee on Apprenticeship

U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration
Office of Work-Based Learning
Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training

Approved:

April 28, 1992

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INTRODUCTION/RATIONALE

Work force preparation has risen to the top of America's domestic policy agenda. President Bush's recently announced Job Training 2000 initiative illustrates the growing sentiment among scores of policy makers, industry and labor leaders, and educators that the country's approach to worker training and education is in need of an overhaul. Factors contributing to the push for educational reform include reports of dismal student performance and alarming school dropout rates, a sagging national economy, and perceived threats to economic recovery and long term growth by foreign competitors.

Many analysts agree that maintaining a competitive edge requires investing more in the training of American workers and adopting education and training strategies that respond better to the needs of the workplace. The search for educational strategies that fulfill these requirements has focused attention on one of the oldest and most respected forms of training -- apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is a training strategy that a) combines supervised, structured on-the-job training with related theoretical instruction and b) is sponsored by employers or labor/management groups that have the ability to hire and train in a work environment. The content of training, both on-the-job and related instruction, is defined and dictated by the needs of the industry. Apprentices learn by working under the supervision of masters in the trade, craft, or occupation; are paid according to a predefined wage progression scale; and receive a Certificate of Completion, which is recognized by federal and state governments, employer associations, labor organizations and individual employers, certifying mastery of skills upon completion of training. In the U.S., apprenticeship constitutes a major form of training for the building trades and numerous manufacturing industries. In many European countries, apprenticeship programs span more industries and serve as the primary form of training for work-bound youth.

Because true apprenticeship programs encompass the critical features that most educational reformers are striving to achieve, systematic efforts should be made to strengthen and expand the nation's existing apprenticeship system. The following is the first phase of a strategic plan that is designed to achieve this objective. This phase, which reflects the belief that a relatively modest investment in a proven, tried and true system will reap enormous benefits almost overnight, focuses on efforts that the Federal government can undertake quickly and that build upon existing activities without creating a new bureaucracy, new regulations, and the expenditure of large amounts of taxpayers' dollars. Phase II, which will be issued at a later date, will focus on issues that require additional investigation and deliberation such as incentives for employer participation, sources and availability of related instruction, linkages with other Federal programs, and strategies for recognizing achievements in apprenticeship. It is important to note that states are also heavily involved in apprenticeship. Although initially beyond the scope of this plan, states should also be looking for ways to improve their present funding commitments to apprenticeship, which even now exceed Federal levels. Adoption of the proposals contained herein, however, should have widespread benefit and are intended to enhance the operation of the apprenticeship system at both the Federal and state levels.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

Americans deserve to be proud of their apprenticeship system. It produces some of the world's most highly skilled, competent workers in their crafts and trades. It operates under well-defined laws and regulations designed to safeguard the welfare of the apprentice and provide education and training that meets the highest standards of excellence. It prepares people perhaps better than any other training strategy to perform effectively in the workplace -- and to do so immediately upon beginning their employment/training. As a recently published report by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) notes, "One proven method of developing high-skilled workers is apprenticeship."[1]

Despite these capabilities, the system has barely tapped its potential. This is due, in large measure, to the failure to invest sufficient resources in ways that would stimulate apprenticeship growth and expansion. A more concerted effort to strategically target resources would accomplish a great deal. For example, it would: lead to the development of new or expanded apprenticeship programs in both traditional and non-traditional industries, programs that would meet employers' pressing needs for skilled workers; encourage greater participation of women, minorities and other underrepresented groups in apprenticeship programs, a top priority among policy makers and within the apprenticeship community; and create new career path opportunities for non-college bound youth or young adults whose career options have not been clearly defined. In times of limited resoures, this is an investment that is particularly sensible. The cost- effectiveness of apprenticeship is clearly demonstrated by the fact that, under current Federal and state appropriations, the cost per apprentice is slightly more than $200.00. This is a tiny fraction of what is spent under other Federal training programs. Moreover, as a practical matter, investment in apprenticeship is essentially budget neutral. The major training costs for apprenticeship are more than recouped by the private sector -- that is, employers and/or labor-management committees. The funds invested in apprenticeship by the Federal and State governments are more than recouped through the Federal, State, and local taxes paid by apprentices on their wages.

In short, apprenticeship holds much promise for meeting the interrelated needs of both employers and future work force participants. The purpose of this strategic plan, therefore, is to encourage activity that will enable the U.S. apprenticeship system to realize its greater potential. Its goals are as follows:

- to encourage the development of apprenticeship programs in a broad array of industries with occupations that lend themselves to the apprenticeship training model;

- to increase the awareness of opportunities offered by apprenticeship across the general population;

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[1] *APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING Administration, Use, and Equal Opportunity*, U.S. General Accounting Office, GAO/HRD-92-43, March 1992, p. 8.

- to assist training sponsors in their efforts to recruit women, minorities and other underrepresented groups by strengthening existing efforts in this regard;
- to complete the development and implementation of a comprehensive national training program/apprentice registration and tracking system; and
- to promote high quality apprenticeship training programs that provide the best possible training in safe learning and working environments.

This strategic plan contains three components: apprenticeship promotion and marketing, the national registration and tracking system, and quality. It describes the current scope of effort that is under way at the Federal level in each area, the shortcomings of these efforts, and proposals to expand or improve existing activities. It assumes that efforts to date have laid a strong foundation that can serve as the building blocks for strengthening and broadening apprenticeship in the U.S.

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PROMOTING AND MARKETING APPRENTICESHIP

Currently, there are approximately 43,000 registered apprenticeship programs in the United States operated by an estimated 500,000 employers and training some 300,000 apprentices. Of these programs, the overwhelming majority (at least two-thirds) are in the building and metal trades and manufacturing industries, with the remainder scattered across other types of businesses and industries.[2] The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training recognizes at least 800 apprenticeable occupations.

The General Accounting Office's recently completed report on apprenticeship cited a decline in enrollment in apprenticeship programs.[3] This may be due to declining public and private sector support for apprenticeship; lack of promotion with employers, educators, employment counselors, and prospective apprentices; and general economic conditions. Federal support for apprenticeship has declined precipitiously in recent years. According the the General Accounting Office, federal expenditures for apprenticeship dropped by about 30% in 1990 dollars between 1980 and 1990. In 1980, more than $22 million (in 1990 dollars) were spent by the Federal government on apprenticeship; by 1990, expenditures totalled approximately $15 million. This

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[2] Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, U.S. Department of Labor.

[3] *APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING Administration, Use, and Equal Opportunity*, U.S. General Accounting Office, GAO/HRD-92-43, March 1992, p. 17.

represents less than 1% of all funds expended by the U.S. Department of Labor on training.[4]

Apprenticeship programs are registered and monitored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) and 27 state apprenticeship agency offices. The BAT consists of 130 regional, state, area, and local offices (10 regional, 50 state, and 70 area and local offices). Currently, total BAT program staff consists of 12 professional and 5 clerical staff in the national office, and 162 professional and 63 clerical staff in regional, state and area offices (15 states and 42 area offices have no BAT clerical personnel whatsoever). These staffing levels represent a more than 40% decline since 1980.[5]

Staff financed by individual states are equally meager. According to the General Accounting Office, state apprenticeship agencies employ 309 full-time staff across the entire country. However, there are no state-funded staff in 23 states, so these states rely entirely on the Federal government for program registration, monitoring and development.[6] The bottom line is this: the number and distribution of training programs across U.S. industries and the number of apprentices is small relative to the potential demand for programs and training slots. But little can be done to educate either employers or prospective applicants about the opportunities offered by apprenticeship until there are adequate numbers of professionals and support staff who have the requisite supplies, equipment, technical assistance capability, materials and travel resources needed to do the job. Current resources must be bolstered and targeted to priority areas in order to encourage the development of apprenticeship programs that are ripe for this training model.

To address this, carefully planned and executed efforts that build upon existing initiatives need to be undertaken to promote apprenticeship. Such efforts must involve a two-pronged strategy that seeks to both develop new programs as well as to expose potential program applicants to career opportunities through apprenticeship. Efforts in this arena should take two principal forms: 1) providing information about apprenticeship (including benefits and advantages of apprenticeship), along with technical assistance regarding program development, to prospective program sponsors; and 2) conducting marketing and outreach efforts to both the public-at-large as well as to targeted groups (e.g., women, minorities, parents, school guidance counselors, employment counselors, etc.) in order to increase their awareness of opportunities in apprenticeship programs.

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[4] *APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING Administration, Use, and Equal Opportunity*, U.S. General Accounting Office, GAO/HRD-92-43, March 1992, p. 18.

[5] Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, U.S. Department of Labor, and U.S. General Accounting Office.

[6] *APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING Administration, Use, and Equal Opportunity*, U.S. General Accounting Office, GAO/HRD-92-43, March 1992, p. 9.

Presently, there are some limited activities of this nature being carried out by the Federal government, states, and individual program sponsors. According to the GAO, Federal apprenticeship and training representatives spend approximately one-fifth of their time promoting apprenticeship while state agency personnel devote approximately 10% of their time on apprenticeship promotion.[7] These levels are inadequate, but they are constrained largely by very limited funds for staff and travel. In the current fiscal year, for example, the anticipated average annual travel allocation for BAT professional staff members is $154 per month and $1,844 per year. Moreover, specially targeted efforts, like the U.S. Department of Labor's Women in the Skilled Trades (WIST)[8] initiative and school-to-apprenticeship transition programs, are important beginnings, but they do not go far enough. Thus, all promotion efforts must be strengthened considerably if the goals are to be achieved.

Resource Needs: Experience from across the country suggests that promoting apprenticeship does not require extraordinary measures, but simply investment in tried and true marketing strategies. These include publicity campaigns, wide distribution of printed materials, conferences, etc. Such efforts coupled with technical assistance should prove to be an effective means for realizing gains in the further development of the U.S. apprenticeship system because they would increase the awareness of both employers as well as potential apprentices in the opportunities and benefits presented by apprenticeship.

To accomplish this, relatively minimal funds should be made available for additional staff, travel, printing, and media advertising either through new appropriations or a redirection of current DOL appropriations. Presently available funds fall far short of what is needed to do an effective job in this arena. A minimum of $19 million more per year should be allocated specifically for promoting apprenticeship among employers and prospective applicants. These funds should be used to increase professional and clerical staff at the national level and in the regional, state and area offices; support travel so that staff can provide critical technical assistance to potential sponsors and perform outreach activities in locations where prospective applicants are likely to be found (e.g., vocational schools, job fairs, employment centers, etc.); conduct targeted outreach for women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups; develop high quality literature (brochures, posters, etc.) about apprenticeship that can be widely distributed to potential sponsors and applicants; and design and implement media campaigns that spark the interest of both employers and potential applicants in apprenticeship. The entire effort to promote apprenticeship should be coordinated nationally but permit tailoring to state and local

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[7] *APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING Administration, Use, and Equal Opportunity*, U.S. General Accounting Office, GAO/HRD-92-43, March 1992, p. 20.

[8] The WIST initiative consists of a public relations campaign (five brochures aimed at specific target populations, a fact sheet, a general video on women in the skilled trades, radio and print public service announcements, a newspaper column, a resource guide and toll-free number for additional information); EEO compliance enforcement; pre-apprenticeship programs; and so on.

needs in recognition of the diversity that exists across the country (e.g., rural vs. urban, etc.).

COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL PROGRAM/APPRENTICE REGISTRATION AND TRACKING SYSTEM

For more than a decade, BAT has been attempting to institute a comprehensive, computerized national program/apprentice registration and tracking system. This system is intended to meet a large number of needs. First, it provides the vehicle for staff to keep accurate and up-to-date records about BAT activities, records of expenditures, etc. It is used in conjunction with other data sources to project the supply of and demand for a given occupation in a specific geographic region and, subsequently, to target promotional efforts. It is used to furnish information needed by other agencies (e.g., Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment Standards Administration for purposes of monitoring Davis-Bacon and Related Acts compliance). It also is designed to meet the ongoing needs of Federal and state governments for current information concerning the status of registered apprenticeship programs and apprentices who are registered in these programs. In this regard, the data base is designed to capture information about date of program registration, numbers of registered apprentices, completion rates, status of compliance reviews, etc. with respect to registered programs and a variety of information about individual apprentices including date of registration, credits earned, number of hours of on-the-job training, date of completion, issuance of completion certificates, etc. The information about program sponsors is needed so that the Federal government and individual states can monitor the quality and performance of registered programs, assure that programs are complying with applicable laws and regulations, and detect early warning signs of difficulties that sponsors may be experiencing that may be correctable through technical assistance or other interventions. Similarly, the information about individual apprentices is needed to monitor the progress of apprentices, provide a mechanism for the transfer of apprentices' records as they move about the country, and so forth. A fully developed system would provide the basis for a national reporting system that would provide information on the number of apprentices trained, their race/ethnicity and gender, occupations, industries, and other pertinent program and planning data.

Unfortunately, implementation of the registration and tracking system has been hampered by insufficent resources. The current configuration of the computer system is simply inadequate. At present, system users consist of BAT's 130 offices, 27 State apprenticeship agencies, 10 regional offices of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, plus a growing number of employers that transmit program data electronically. For this level of use, the system currently has only 38 ports. An estimated 50 additional ports are needed to assure that the system can be accessed in a timely and efficient manner by all users.

Exacerbating the problem is the fact that there are an insufficient number of personal computers in the BAT regional, state, area and local offices for routine office functions (word processing,

etc.). Consequently, BAT staff are often forced to use the tracking system's equipment for these purposes. This ties up limited phone lines and has the effect of significantly constraining the availability of the system for which it is intended -- input and retrieval of program/apprentice data.

Finally, another major impediment to the efficient functioning of the system is the lack of resources for training. All users, including Federal and state employees and those in private industry who access the system, should be properly trained in its use. Unfortunately, this is not the case today. Many existing Federal and state staff are not fully trained in the use of the system. Likewise, funds are not available to train new staff or other new users. To overcome this, resources are needed to design and implement a comprehensive training process that would be administered on an ongoing basis to existing and new system users.

Resource Needs: In order to institute a useful, fully functioning, efficient tracking and monitoring system, resources are needed for hardware (additional ports, personal computers and printers), software development and improvement, staff, and training, as well as for states' participation in the system (data transfer/communications costs). Investments in these areas will enable BAT to complete the development and installation of the tracking and registration system and maintain its operations on an ongoing basis. Total funds needed to accomplish this effort are $2.5 million.

QUALITY PROMOTION AND ASSURANCE

The last component of this strategic plan calls for strengthening efforts aimed at assuring that all registered apprenticeship programs meet the highest quality standards. Defining and measuring what is quality in apprenticeship training is a complex task because it involves a great many factors. Most experts would agree, however, that it consists of at least the following: meeting registration requirements; specifying the content of on-the-job training (including both skills and safety training) and related instruction and providing such training in accordance with these specifications; maintaining adequate, accurate and up-to-date records; following appropriate apprentice selection procedures and adhering to an affirmative action plan (where and when appropriate); complying with completion requirements; and utilizing qualified instructors.

Meeting these requirements demands, first and foremost, that program sponsors get the technical assistance needed to guarantee that their programs are being operated in the best possible manner and, second, that regular on-site reviews be conducted by qualified and well-trained staff who can evaluate a sponsor's program, observe and interview the apprentices, suggest corrective actions when necessary, or, if warranted, set the wheels in motion to de-register a program deemed unacceptable. In the final analysis, the overriding objective is to safeguard the welfare of apprentices and assure that they receive the highest quality training and education.

Today, those responsible at the Federal and State levels for promoting and assuring quality within the U.S. apprenticeship system do not have the resources needed to perform this function effectively. Currently available funds again fall far short of what is needed to support and monitor the 43,000 registered programs and is certainly insufficient to finance the level of activity that will be needed under an expanded apprenticeship system.

Resource needs: An effective quality promotion and assurance program will require additional resources to support staff, travel, the development and printing of education and training materials to assist sponsors with their quality management procedures, and to assure the internal quality operations of BAT. With additional funds, BAT staff will be able to provide the technical assistance and guidance that is needed in this arena and conduct quality reviews to assure that sponsors are meeting their obligations as set forth in law and regulation. An estimated $3 million is needed to support these activities.

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CONCLUSION

Based on the experience covering centuries in time, apprenticeship is proven to be an extremely cost effective method of developing the high skills required of American workers today. The use of apprenticeship in the U.S. has been limited over the years due to a serious lack of public awareness of the opportunities offered and limited resources made available for promotion and administration of apprenticeship.

Accordingly, a modest investment of $24.5 million will support the kinds of activities needed to significantly expand apprenticeship and make it a viable training strategy for thousands of people who otherwise have little opportunity for skills development.

The Federal Committee on Apprenticeship is established by charter to advise the U.S. Secretary of Labor on matters pertaining to apprenticeship and training in the U.S. The FCA is comprised of representatives of labor, employers, educators, and others.

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR APPRENTICESHIP

FACT SHEET

→ In 1990, the Federal government spent $15.5 million and individual states spent approximately $50.0 million for apprenticeship training in the U.S. For the nearly 300,000 registered apprentices, this represented a highly cost-effective investment of slightly more than $200.00 per apprentice.

→ Investment in apprenticeship is essentially budget neutral. The major training costs for apprenticeship are paid by the private sector -- that is, employers and/or labor-management committees. The funds invested in apprenticeship by the Federal and state governments are more than recouped through the Federal, state, and local taxes paid by apprentices on their wages.

→ Between 1980 and 1990, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) staff ceilings dropped from 426 positions to 250 positions, a decline of more than 40%.

→ BAT consists of 10 regional, 50 state, and 70 area and local offices. Staff in these offices are responsible for marketing and promotion, technical assistance, compliance reviews, maintaining apprentice and program registration data, etc. On average, there are .8 FTE professional staff and .48 FTE clerical staff in the field offices. Fifteen state and 42 area offices have no clerical personnel whatsoever.

→ In the current fiscal year, travel allocations for each professional staff member will equal an estimated $1,844 per year or $154 per month.

→ According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, Federal apprenticeship and training representatives spend approximately one-fifth of their time promoting apprenticeship while state agency personnel devote approximately 10% of their time on apprenticeship promotion. This level of effort is far too limited to lead to significant expansion of apprenticeship, but further efforts are hampered by insufficient staff and travel funds.

Recommendation: Federal funding for apprenticeship should be increased by $24.5 million to support the promotion and expansion of apprenticeship training in the U.S, to assure the quality of apprenticeship programs, and to support the operation of a comprehensive apprentice/program registration tracking system.